

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

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Report on Institutional Planning and Review Meetings
Coordinating Board for Higher Education
October 14, 2004

DESCRIPTION

At the June 2004 meeting of the Presidential Advisory Committee, MDHE staff, CBHE members and leaders of higher education institutions discussed the value of reinstituting institutional performance review and planning meetings for public institutions. The discussion resulted in a commitment to hold meetings with all public institutions, using a revised structure based on PAC feedback. The intent of this board item is to provide an update on the institutional planning and review meetings completed during summer 2004.

Background

For several years through 2001, MDHE staff annually held meetings with institutional representatives during the summer months. MDHE staff and institutional representatives used these meetings to discuss issues relating to institutional strategic planning, review of performance measures and results, mission enhancement funding, and institutional budget proposals.

Feedback from presidents and chancellors during the June 2004 Presidential Advisory Committee meeting recommended design features for future meetings that would:

- Emphasize processes as well as results
- Use strategic plans of institutions as a base for discussion
- Focus only on high priority issues
- Use a mutually-agreed upon agenda

During August and September 2004, meetings were held with all public institutions. The agenda for these meetings was structured to provide an informal opportunity for institutional and MDHE staff to achieve greater understanding and appreciation of the interdependence of both state and institutional priority goals and their mutual reinforcement. Major goals for these meetings included the following:

- Enhancing mutual understanding of institutional and statewide priorities, processes, and performance
- Encouraging greater collaboration in developing and achieving common goals; and
- Reviewing and strengthening evidence about the impact of investments in higher education that fosters more effective legislative and budget initiatives.

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Separate meetings were held with each public four-year institution and Linn State Technical College. The meeting with the leaders of the community colleges focused on system performance and planning, rather than on particular initiatives of individual schools. From the perspective of MDHE these summer meetings were very successful.

The focus of review and planning during these meetings included the three key result areas to which the CBHE and the MDHE are committed: participation, preparation and performance excellence. MDHE staff and institution officials discussed the performance and statistical profile of each institution, especially as related to these key result areas. These reviews of each profile identified a number of issues that will likely be a focus of future annual meetings with institutions, and will inform CBHE and MDHE policy efforts over the coming year.

In the area of increasing successful participation, many of the meetings included a discussion of institution financial aid and success in recruiting Pell-eligible students, strategies for increasing freshman retention and six-year graduation rates and enhancing transfer and articulation between two- and four-year institutions. A significant portion of many of these meetings was devoted to consideration of increased state grant programs for need-based financial aid as a tool for increased participation.

Another major concern discussed was the impact of developmental or remedial coursework on successful participation. In addition to the work of public two-year institutions in developmental education, a number of public four-year institutions also offer significant remedial coursework. In most cases, at least 50% of those taking such coursework did not complete a degree and often dropped out of college. Some institutions are working to enhance the effectiveness of intervention programs to help close the participation gap. The MDHE staff should help expand knowledge about successful efforts to accomplish this goal.

Another topic discussed focused on the interest in Missouri to re-establish a viable Pre K -16 partnership with an emphasis on improved preparation for beyond high school options in both work and continued formal education. The interdependence between Pre K -12 and higher education focuses attention on the quality of Missouri's teaching workforce. Some schools have made marked improvements in achieving high levels of Praxis examination performance, even in the absence of higher scores on entry-level examinations such as the ACT. Other schools have had limited success in this area. Many schools have focused on expanding the number of students taking a rigorous high-school core curriculum, including strategies for expanding the number of schools able to offer the core curriculum. Also, several institutions have initiated efforts to expand early awareness and outreach to K-12 students to enhance preparation for higher education.

A number of institutions have undertaken strategies in the third key result area, performance excellence. Most institutions engage in some regular form of strategic planning. Many of the processes described impressed MDHE staff, but a challenge remains how best to evaluate the rigor of each effort. Several more institutions have undertaken quality-based initiatives through the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) of the Higher Learning Commission, which allows the use of quality criteria for planning in lieu of the existing accreditation process. MDHE staff is exploring the development of a potential surrogate measure for the impact of performance improvement efforts.

During each meeting, time was spent discussing budget issues including appropriations, expenditures, challenges of balancing budgets with reduced resources, and requests for the FY 06 budget. Institutions were provided with information about previous spending patterns and tuition charges within the context of averages for all Missouri institutions within and across public sectors. Reference to the percent of total E&G expenditures dedicated to instruction was also emphasized. Performance in this area was very encouraging. Almost every four-year institution was able to increase funding for instruction over the period from 2000-2004, despite the funding reductions during that time. DHE staff was especially interested in intentional strategies by schools to increase this percentage.

During these meetings, the need for additional resources to achieve priority state goals for higher education was acknowledged. MDHE staff discussed its commitment to design an effective communication and funding strategy for FY 06 that will result in increased funds for all institutions. In this context, MDHE staff shared its initial thoughts on developing a unified higher education budget that would emphasize the following three components:

- Resource priorities and investment protection funding – providing state support for uncontrollable costs institutions have incurred over the last several years, such as healthcare premiums and benefits for employees, as well as support for maintenance and repair funding required to project the value of the state's previous investments in higher education;
- Expansion of need-based financial aid; and
- Performance excellence funding that supports institutional contributions to state priorities.

Conclusions

From the perspective of MDHE staff, the time dedicated to summer institutional review and planning meetings with public institutions was well worth the effort. The discussion of both institutional and state goals and the review of strategic plans and performance data served to increase understanding of particular challenges and opportunities for public higher education in Missouri.

As mentioned during these meetings, the MDHE focus for FY 2005 will continue to emphasize implementation challenges; the identification and execution of strategies to achieve goals in the result areas of preparation for beyond high school options, successful participation in postsecondary education, and performance excellence of institutions. In looking to the future several follow-up commitments are important including:

- Continued sharing throughout the year
- Meetings held in the field to understand better campus nuances
- Efforts to engage in conversations with the independent and proprietary sectors

STATUTORY REFERENCE

Section 173.020 RSMo, CBHE statutory responsibility to plan systematically for the state system of higher education

RECOMMENDED ACTION

This is a discussion item only.

ATTACHMENT(S)

None